



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Organic Food Producer Certification Information

What is organic food?

The National Organic Standards Board defines organic agriculture as an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances bio-diversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain, and enhance ecological harmony. 'Organic' is a labeling term that denotes products produced under the authority of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990.

What is organic certification?

Organic certification means that an independent, third party has verified that the requirements of organic crop production, processing and handling have been met. Under the National Organic Program, all products sold as organic in the United States must be certified by a National Organic Program (NOP) accredited certification agency, except for producers that annually sell \$5,000 or less of organic products.

How do I get certified?

- Step 1: Complete and submit an Application, Site Information Form, Organic Production System Plan, application fees and a detailed map of the organic production areas.
- Step 2: Be available for an inspection. The inspector will review material application records, your Organic Production System Plan, receipts of materials purchased, seed invoices, fields, crops and storage areas. Inspections usually take between 2-3 hours depending upon the complexity of the farm.
- Step 3: After inspecting the farm, an inspection report is reviewed by WSDA staff. If all production practices and documentation are in compliance with program standards, an Organic or Transitional Producer Certificate is issued.

Can I grow both organic and conventional crops on the same land?

Yes. Adequate buffer zones must be in place to prevent the unintended application (e.g. spray drift) of a prohibited substance to the organic crop applied to adjoining land. Producers must have procedures to prevent organic crops from contacting prohibited substances applied to land that is not under organic management.

How long does it take to get certified as an organic food producer?

New Applicants - If all the necessary information is received in a timely manner, the inspection and certification process takes 90-120 days. Incomplete applications will delay the certification process. Due to the large volume of inspections needing to be conducted, it may take an organic food inspector several weeks to fit a new inspection into their schedule.

Renewal Applicants - Organic certification is an annual procedure. WSDA mails renewal applications in January or February of each year. An application, system plan update, and fee (based on the previous calendar year gross revenue) needs to be submitted to WSDA every year and the renewal application must be postmarked by March 1st. If the renewal application is not postmarked by the due date, a \$75 late fee will be charged. Renewal applicants are issued their organic certificate after their application is received, reviewed, and approved.

How do I obtain certification for organic livestock?

If you are interested in obtaining certification as an organic livestock producer you will need to complete the Organic Livestock System Plan. Contact the office at (360) 902-1805 or email: organic@agr.wa.gov to receive a livestock application packet. The National Organic Program (NOP) sections 205.236 — 205.239 contain the standards that need to be followed for organic livestock production. The standards include criteria for the origin of livestock, feed, health care, and living conditions. Substances that are allowed for health care, feed supplements, feed additives or for other purposes are listed in NOP sections 205.603 and 205.604.

Are there other requirements that I need to comply with to market my crops?

The Handbook of Regulations for Direct Farm Marketing is designed to assist farmers in negotiating the Washington State regulations associated with direct marketing of farm products. By providing producers with this regulatory information, the Department of Agriculture can help ensure compliance with food safety and licensing policies, facilitate the use of direct marketing strategies, and promote localized food systems. There are many resources available to assist small farm businesses in successfully direct marketing their products. Many of these have been listed in the back of "The Green Book" to help producers find pertinent information on direct marketing. Contact the Organic Food Program to obtain a copy of the handbook.

Do I need to be certified as an organic processor?

Producers who process an organic agricultural product must also be certified as an Organic Food Processor. If you engage in canning, freezing, drying, dehydrating, cooking, pressing, powdering, packaging, baking, heating, mixing, grinding, churning, separating, extracting, cutting, fermenting, eviscerating, preserving, jarring, slaughtering or otherwise processing organic food products, you are a processor and need to be a certified organic processor. Processed organic food contains organically grown ingredients and does not contain artificially derived preservatives, colorings, flavorings or other artificial additives. Processed organic foods that have both organic and non-organic ingredients have specific labeling restrictions on the use of the term "organic."

If you have any questions regarding certification, please contact Christa Bemis at (360) 902-1805, FAX (360) 902-2087, email: cbemis@agr.wa.gov or view the Organic Food Program web site at <http://agr.wa.gov/foodanimal/organic/default.htm>

Do I need to be certified as an organic handler?

If you sell, distribute or pack organic food products for other producers, you are a handler and you must obtain an organic handler certificate. Please contact this office to have an Organic Food Handler application packet sent to you. Handlers of organic food must maintain the identity of organic food and prevent contamination with post-harvest materials. Organic food is identical in appearance to non-organic food. Bin tags, labels, scale tickets, and lot control documents must clearly identify the product as organic. Handlers of organic food must demonstrate that they have procedures in place to maintain the identity and segregation of organic food at all times.

Export of WSDA certified Organic Food Products

Europe

Export of WSDA certified organic products to Europe is growing rapidly each year. European Union (EU) regulations differ from US National Organic Standards in several important areas. If a WSDA certified product is going to be used as an ingredient in a processed product certified by a European agency, stricter production, processing, and handling rules will apply. In order to enable easier access of your product to European markets, it is recommended that you consider the following information:

- The EU prohibits the use of sodium nitrate on organic crops. WSDA must have documentation to verify that no sodium nitrate has been used on crops intended for export to the European Union. It is highly recommended that you do not use sodium nitrate if any part of your crop is headed for European markets.
- Several European certification agencies prohibit the use of manure from factory farms.
- Several European certification agencies prohibit the use of manure that has come from an animal that has consumed feed, primarily corn and soybeans, that contains Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO).
- Several European certification agencies prohibit the production of any GMO crop on the same holding as an organic crop.
- Several European certification agencies prohibit chlorine substances in post harvest handling.
- European organic standards do not allow antibiotics to be used for disease control in tree fruits.

Japan

JAS certification is required by Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries (MAFF) for all retail food products sold as "organic" in Japan. JAS certification can only be granted by a Japanese MAFF approved Recognized Certification Organization (RCO). To obtain RCO status, the certification agency must be based in Japan. Since WSDA is not able to gain RCO recognition, we have built strong working relationships with several Japan based certification agencies. Upon request, WSDA can provide inspections on behalf of Japanese certifiers to determine JAS compliance.

Bulk (non-retail) organic products that do not have the JAS label, do not require JAS certification. For bulk products, WSDA must verify that no potassium bicarbonate, lignin sulfonate, or alkali-extracted humic acids have been used in order to issue a USDA Japanese Export Certificate.

Export Certificates

Export Certificates and other documents are often needed to accompany shipments of organic food to foreign markets. Export Certificates verify that the shipment has been produced, handled, and processed in accordance with foreign organic standards. Applications for Export Certificate are available upon request.

If you have further questions pertaining to the export of WSDA certified organic food products, please contact Rachael Jamison at (360) 902-1951 or email: rjamison@agr.wa.gov.

Organic Advisory Board

The WSDA Organic Advisory Board (OAB) was established in 1987 to advise WSDA concerning the implementation of the Organic Food Program. The OAB consists of organic producers, processors, handlers and other interested parties that meet to discuss the Organic Food Program and recommend policy to the WSDA Organic Food Program. The members of the board include:

- Michael Blakely, Growing Things, Carnation
- Dain Craver, Crave Organic Orchard, Royal City
- Michele Catalano, Pike Place Market CSA Program, Seattle
- David Granatstein, WSU Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, Wenatchee
- Orlin Knutson, Alamo Orchards, Mattawa
- Marilyn Lynn, Rama Farms, Bridgeport
- Alec McErlich, Small Planet Foods, Sedro-Woolley
- Tim Morrissey, Coyote Creek Farm, Rochester
- Harold Ostenson, Pacific Organic Produce, George
- Rick Repp, Northwest Natural Farm, Endicott
- Phil Unterschuetz, Integrated Fertility Management, Wenatchee
- Roger Wechsler, Samish Bay Cheese, Bow

The Organic Advisory Board meetings are open to the public. Contact Miles McEvoy at (360) 902-1924 or email mmcevoy@agr.wa.gov for more information.

Organic Food Program staff

- Mark Amrhein, Material Review Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1882, mamrhein@agr.wa.gov - Evaluates materials for brand name material registration; Inspector; Reviewer.
- Christa Bemis, Organic Office Assistant Senior, Olympia, (360) 902-1805, cbemis@agr.wa.gov – Administrative support; Receptionist.
- Brenda Book, Organic Program Assistant, Olympia, (360) 902-1987, bbook@agr.wa.gov – Administrative support.
- Richard Carr, Organic Food Inspector, Mount Vernon, (360) 561-2404, rcarr@agr.wa.gov – Inspector, North Western Washington; Reviewer.
- Jeff Collins, Organic Food Inspector, Chelan, (509) 682-8457, jcollins@agr.wa.gov – Inspector, North Central Washington.
- Les Eklund, Organic Field Supervisor, Olympia, (360) 902-1891, leklund@agr.wa.gov - Supervises and trains field inspectors; Inspector, Quality Assurance
- Mike Haskett, Organic Food Inspector, Yakima, (509) 225-2612, mhaskett@agr.wa.gov - Inspector, South Central Washington.
- Rachael Jamison, Organic Program Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1951, rjamison@agr.wa.gov – Coordinates work on organic export issues; Inspector; Reviewer.
- Katherine Lange, Organic Food Inspector, Olympia, (360) 902-1877, klange@agr.wa.gov – Inspector, South Western Washington.
- Miles McEvoy, Organic Program Manager, Olympia, (360) 902-1924, mmcevoy@agr.wa.gov – Manages program; Compliance and enforcement; Budget; Personnel; Legislative and rule changes; National Organic Program implementation.
- John Morrison, Organic Food Inspector, Spokane, (208) 882-7322, jmorrison@agr.wa.gov - Inspector, Eastern Washington.
- Marcia Wilkinson, Organic Certification Coordinator, Olympia, (360) 902-1885, mwilkinson@agr.wa.gov – Coordinates processor and handler certification; Reviewer; Document control; Accreditation coordinator.

Please contact us if you have any questions.